**9th Form National Poetry Recitation Contest**

**Title of speech**: Be Yourself. Embrace your Quirks

**Writer**: Ed Sheeran, 2015

**Link to audio recording of the speech**[: http://time.com/3916626/ed-sheeran-original-speech-stuttering/](file:///C:\Users\Liz%20Barron\Documents\NPRC\NPRC%202019\%20http\time.com\3916626\ed-sheeran-original-speech-stuttering\)

**Excerpt:**

I was a very, very weird child. Very weird child. And I had a port-wine stain birthmark on my face that I got lasered off when I was very young, and one day they forgot to put the anesthetic on, and then ever since then I had a stutter—and I also had very, very big blue NHS glasses – NHS is the National Health Service, one day, I hope you’ll have the same.

And I lacked an ear drum on one side of my face—one side of my ear—so stuttering was actually the least of my problems when I went to school, but it was still quite a difficult thing, and the thing that I found most difficult about it was, knowing what to say but not really being able to express it in the right way….

And just be yourself, embrace your quirks—being weird is a wonderful thing. But I think, you know, I’m not very good at speeches, I don’t really do a lot of speeches but I think the one thing I want to say is be yourself, embrace yourself, embrace your quirks, and embrace your weirdness.

\*Spoken by Ed Sheeran at the American Institute for Stuttering Benefit Gala

**About the Speaker**: Ed Sheeran (born 17 February 1991) is an English singer, songwriter, guitarist, record producer, and actor. Sheeran has sold more than 150 million records worldwide, making him one of the [world's best-selling music artists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_best-selling_music_artists). Two of his albums are in the list of the [best-selling albums in UK chart history](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_best-selling_albums_in_the_United_Kingdom): x at number 20, and ÷ at number 34. When he was a child, he had a number of small disabilities, and a disfiguring birthmark on his face. He also had a bad stammer or stutter. Often in the UK, boys with red hair are teased and called nicknames.

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**About the speech**

In this speech Ed Sheeran is telling other young people who may feel like they are ugly, or not good enough, to be proud of themselves, no matter what they look or sound like. A port wine stain is a large, red birthmark, generally considered as a disfiguration. A stammer is when you fall over your words, and have difficulty making certain sounds. National Health glasses are what you get free from the government in the UK if you do not have the money to pay for glasses to help your poor eyesight. Sheeran—now one of the most famous and popular singers in the world—is saying that he was a misfit, and encouraging other kids like him to believe in themselves and keep pursuing their dreams.

**Discussion Guide:**

Draw what you imagine Ed Sheeran looked like as a little boy.

Why do you think people with stammers sometimes feel embarrassed? How could you help them feel that they are being heard when they have difficulty speaking?

Do you sometimes feel that you don’t fit in? Or aren’t good enough? How might Ed Sheeran’s story inspire you when you feel that way?